

odd C1

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. An article of footwear comprising:  
2 an upper;  
3 an outsole defining a ground engaging surface;  
4 a sole disposed between said upper and said outsole, said sole  
5 including an energy return system;  
6 wherein said energy return system comprises a first rigid plate, a  
7 second rigid plate spaced a predetermined distance from said first rigid plate, and  
8 at least one separating element disposed therebetween to maintain the spacing  
9 between said plates.

1 2. The article of footwear of claim 1 wherein said first and second  
2 plates comprise a material having a modulus of elasticity of at least approximately  
3  $32 \times 10^6$  lb/in<sup>2</sup>.

1 3. The article of footwear of claim 2 wherein said material comprises  
2 carbon graphite.

1 4. The article of footwear of claim 1 wherein said at least one  
2 separating element comprises an elastomeric material.

1 5. The article of footwear of claim 1 wherein said at least one  
2 separating element comprises two separating elements, a first one of said  
3 separating elements being disposed in a toe area of said article of footwear and a  
4 second one of said separating elements being disposed in a heel area of said article  
5 of footwear.

1           6.   The article of footwear of claim 1 wherein said first one of said  
2 separating elements is generally arcuate.

1           7.   The article of footwear of claim 1 wherein said first and second  
2 rigid plates define an energy return system.

1           8.   An energy return system for use in a shoe sole, said system  
2 comprising:  
3               a first rigid plate;  
4               a second rigid plate spaced a predetermined distance from said first  
5 rigid plate;  
6               at least one separating element maintaining the distance between  
7 said first and second rigid plates.

1           9.   The energy return system of claim 8 wherein said first and second  
2 plates comprise a material having a modulus of elasticity of at least approximately  
3  $32 \times 10^6$  lb/in<sup>2</sup>.

1           10.   The energy system of claim 9 wherein said material comprises  
2 carbon graphite.

1           11.   The energy system of claim 10 wherein said first and second plates  
2 are formed by a plurality of layers of carbon graphite.

1           12.   The energy system of claim 8 wherein each of said first and second  
2 rigid plates extends substantially the entire length of a foot.

1 13. The energy system of claim 12 wherein each of said first and  
2 second rigid plates is configured to include a rocker bottom.

1 14. The energy system of claim 8 wherein each of said first and second  
2 rigid plates extends only a portion of the length of a foot.

1 15. The energy system of claim 14 wherein each of said first and  
2 second rigid plates extends from a toe area of the foot to an arch area of the foot.

1 16. The energy system of claim 8 wherein said at least one separating  
2 element comprises an elastomeric material.

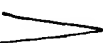
1 17. The energy system of claim 8 wherein said at least one separating  
2 element comprises two separating elements, a first one of said separating elements  
3 disposed in a forward end of the energy return system and a second one of said  
4 separating elements disposed in a rearward end of the energy return system.

1 18. A shoe sole incorporating the energy return system of claim 8.

1 19. An article of footwear incorporating the shoe sole of claim 16.

1 (20.) A shoe sole for an article of footwear comprising:  
2 an outsole defining a ground engaging surface;  
3 an upper rigid plate spaced from the outsole for attachment to an  
4 upper;  
5 a lower rigid plate disposed between the outsole and the upper rigid  
6 plate; and

7 at least one separating element disposed between the upper and  
8 lower rigid plates to maintain the separation thereof.

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*h7* 

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